WILDCAT

For a non-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian solidarity movement.

MAY 2013 DAY

THE ORIGIN OF MAYDAY

CELEBRATE PEOPLES HISTORY:

May 1st, International Workers' Day, commemorates the historic struggle of working people throughout the world. The holiday began in the 1880s, linked to the battle for the eight-hour day and the Haymarket Affair, in which eight anarchists were framed and sentenced to death in connection to uprisings against the repression of active strikers.

An international campaign resulted in two of the death sentences being commuted to life, but worldwide protest did not stop the US State. Of the remaining five, one (Louis Ling) cheated the executioner and killed himself on the eve of the execution. The remaining four (Albert Parsons, August Spies, George Engel and Adolph Fischer) were hanged on November 11th 1887. They are known in Labour history as the Haymarket Martyrs. Between 150,000 and 500,000 lined the route taken by the funeral cortege and between 10,000 to 25,000 were estimated to have watched the burial. In 1889, the American delegation attending the International Workers congress in Paris proposed that May 1st be adopted as a workers' holiday. This was to commemorate working class struggle and the "Martyrdom of the Chicago Eight". Since then Mayday has become a day for international solidarity. Even less known is Australia's connection to the day:

"The happy idea of using a proletarian holiday celebration as a means to attain the eight-hour day was first born in Australia. The workers there decided in 1856 to organize a day of complete stoppage together with meetings and entertainment as a demonstration in favor of the eight-hour day. The day of this celebration was to be April 21. At first, the Australian workers intended this only for the year 1856.But this first celebration had such a strong effect on the proletarian masses of Australia, enlivening them and leading to new agitation, that it was decided to repeat the celebration every year.

The idea of a proletarian celebration was quickly accepted and, from Australia, began to spread to other countries until finally it had conquered the whole proletarian world. The first to follow the example of the Australian workers were the Americans. In 1886 they decided that May 1 should be the day of universal work stoppage. On this day 200,000 of

–of them left their work and demanded the eight-hour day. Later, police and legal harassment prevented the workers for many years from repeating this [size] demonstration. However in 1888 they renewed their decision and decided that the next celebration would be May 1, 1890.

– Rosa Luxembourg (1894)

May Day, the festival for worldwide working class solidarity, is a product of the struggle of working people using direct action and solidarity to change the world. May Day is more than a monument, it is more than the past, it is a time for all rebels and workers to reflect on the struggle, to place ourselves in the living history of the movement for lives worth living, lives of dignity. It is a time to remember past struggles and demonstrate our hope for a better future. A day to remember that An Injury to One is An Injury to All.

Originally meant for a single event, the May day celebration stirred the workers such that it was repeated each year and began to spread throughout the world. The next group of workers to repeat this event were in the United States, where, with the increase in militancy of the workers up to 1886, workers decided to repeat the day of stoppages and celebration, known as the General Strike. The great railroad strike of 1877 spread across the country due to oppressive working and economic conditions during an economic downturn. This led to a new militancy growing amongst the workers who would be crushed by police, army and militia with bloodshed and the killing of a hundred and wounding of hundreds more. With a growth of violence from the state, worker organising and agitating increased, leading to the events of May 1886.

At a protest meeting to illuminate the events at the McCormick Reaper Works in Chicago where at least two workers had been killed the day before, a bomb was thrown at police sent to break up the protest. Several police were killed and wounded, with panicked police firing into the crowd killing several people and wounding many more. The identity of the bomber was never found. What followed was America's first 'Red Scare', condemnation in the Capitalist press and the mass arrests of radicals and closure of Anarchist newspapers including Chicago's German language Arbeiter-Zeitung and English language The Alarm.

In the resulting paranoia, eight anarchists were arrested and tried for the bomb, including Albert Parsons, Oscar Neebe, and August Spies, as well as several of a more militant stripe, including Adolph Fischer, George Engel, and Louis Lingg. The other two were Samuel Fielden and Michael Schwab. Illinois Governor John Altgeld reviewed the case seven years later and exonerated the anarchists. But this did not save the men of whom five were sentenced to be executed. Louis Lingg took his own life, with Albert Parsons, August Spies, Adolph Fischer, and George Engel hanged on November 11 1887. The men became martyrs to the workers movement and crystallised May 1 as the day of international workers' solidarity with workers everywhere.

Despite being denied freedom of movement, over 800 Aboriginal station workers secretly organised themselves across thousands of kilometres and walked off sheep stations in the north-west of Western Australia (on 1 May 1946). A six week meeting of 200 Lawmen in 1942 had reached consensus about striking, but action was deferred until after the Second World War. The walk off marked the beginning of a carefully organised indefinite strike against the exploitation of the colonial ruling class, not just for conditions, but for land and freedom.

Tough action by the Police and Department of Native Affairs officials forced many strikers back to the stations, but this was short-lived and a month later two major strike camps joined by a railway line were permanently set up. To survive, the strikers collected and traded kangaroo and goat skins and began alluvial mining operations. The mining was so successful it supported them for over 20 years – but unfortunately also drew the bosses attention to the vast mineral deposits in the area.
(See film: How the West was Lost [Ronin])

In Barcaldine, Queensland, May 1 1891 saw the first local May Day march as workers marched as part of the Shearer's Strike. Since then, the first Monday in May has become Queensland's recognition of this strong symbol of worker solidarity.

Strike assembly

WE ARE THOSE WHO PRODUCE THE WEALTH

Amid a period of large State-wide restructuring, numerous changes have been implemented in order to downsize costs and create an attractive business model for the state, corporate interests and key investment stakeholders. Ultimately, new measures will continue to be unleashed, allowing for greater profit making potential on the side of the state and capital. On the other side, however, more and more of the working class will be forced into precarious positions, destitution and poverty.

Of course the government will never have the guts to tell us that these changes have zero chance of improving our lives. At its core, their aims are to further capital's preservation and increase its stranglehold over each one of us, through a series of social restructuring, thus allowing for an intensifying project of job losses, intensification of work, and attempts at privatisation, and therefore consolidating the model of a cheap, flexible and obedient workforce.

As always it is the working class who are left to face the full brunt of the changes imposed from above, and will continue to do so until we begin to pry ourselves from this system. Far from an abstract notion, we know the true power of taking our lives into our hands, with solidarity, equality and freedom at the forefront.

But this is a challenge of our times. To regain a working class consciousness of our position and our collective interests. Interests that stand in the exact opposite to that of the bourgeoisie, of the boss class, the state and capital.

We have nothing in common with those that wish to lead us, to rule us. This fact must be made clear. What could we have in common when we have already seen mass layoffs in the public sector throughout 2012, alongside the outsourcing of jobs, and the cutting of vital public services, while in the background of it all is the continuing murmurs and recommendations to privatise key assets.

From everything we have witnessed, we plainly ask: what benefit could possibly have come to those who have lost their jobs, mortgages, future, as a result of these cuts?

As a class we must understand how the bosses, state and capital attempt to disorientate us. As a class we must understand that it is of no interest to us that the bosses are able to continue on their never-ending quest for profits, while we wait for the scraps. What interests us is a life with dignity and creativity, a life where we all can secure the material conditions for survival, a life capitalism can not offer us.

Reforms of such a nature to the system that we are witnessing– already implemented or planned – are using the same old excuses for the need of 'development' and 'tightening the budget' to cover their mission: the generalisation and preservation of the social as an economic sphere, as a sphere where not only what you have produced, but also what you are and what you can do are already alienated.

It is time we go beyond demanding some small change to the procedures that keep this system running. The ruling class – with their media-in-toe - demands from us that we enter into the logic of demands; that we enter the logic of exchange, a capitalist logic; that if we meet their demands we shall justly be rewarded. But we've gone well beyond knowing how much faith we can place into their logic. Their logic already aims at our obedience, using the backdrop of a all sorts of crisis in the economy, budget, legislation, business and elsewhere, to justify all kinds of attacks and cuts.

But as it was in 1886 in Chicago, without the intermediation of any central leadership, the workers themselves - with the prospect of overturning the existing political system - began a course of struggle for social liberation, as a part of the struggle for the 8 hour day. We need to draw on and learn from this history, while finding experiences and constructing new levels of solidarity and confidence. In this way we can place ourselves against this monstorus system and open up the possibilities for the society and life we want.

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WE ARE ALL ALIENS..

No Bosses; no Bureaucrats. Build Grassroots Unionism

..IN A WORLD OF BOSSES

Look through the mainstream newspapers this month and you'll see hundreds of articles accusing workers and the unemployed of being thugs, greedy, lazy, unlawful, unreasonable and unfair. Despite all the cuts to jobs, services, the arts and health (all the while funding bullshit, like $200,000 for the Big Brother show), the bosses press seem to think that they are the ones who are being thrown onto the scrapheap. ***The Australian*** this for example has a plethora of articles all similarly titled. One article, titled 'Unions hold employers to ransom' for example states, 'Unfortunately, the good times are over. What we have now is a determined push by some construction unions to once again hold employers and the public to ransom using the old tactics of coercion, the pursuit of unlawful claims, illegal strike action and illegal pickets.' Similarly Gina Rinehart (who inherited her billions based on the pillaging of Aboriginal land) urged those lazy workers "*jealous of the wealthy to spend less time drinking and socialising, and more time working.*"

All of these stories serve the purpose of building an illusion that workers and employers all stand on a fair and equal basis, and that society is a debating chamber where the most reasonable ideas and arguments are implemented through democratic vote – *'we're all in this together'*, so they say. This myth also shapes the response of people against the cuts. There's been a lot of talk on the street about the importance of 'winning the argument'. This strategy holds that the best way to go about fighting attacks on wages, living conditions and services is to point out the flaws in the pro-cuts arguments and suggest alternative policies which would avoid the need for cuts. Some even seem to think that if the argument is won, the government will see the error of its ways, stop the planned cuts and everyone can go home happy. It isn't hard to see where this strategy falls down. It certainly isn't the weakness of the anti-cuts arguments; it's been convincingly shown that these cuts aren't 'necessary' at all (see for example the *Workers Audit*, which points out that the cuts:
" *follow an agenda of massive privatisation, of a state that increases an onerous burden of work on its employees, that sells off more assets and pulls away the provision of services to the majority of people – and one that focuses on the 'sustainability of the State's capital program' (p205) which reading through the lines we can understand as building and maintain infrastructure for the benefit of mining interests...With the financial crisis, the state was left with a debt that was made worse by natural disaster. Now, the LNP government exaggerates that debt to enact an agenda of privatisation and austerity. This will please banks and mining companies stand to gain too. But we all lose..")*

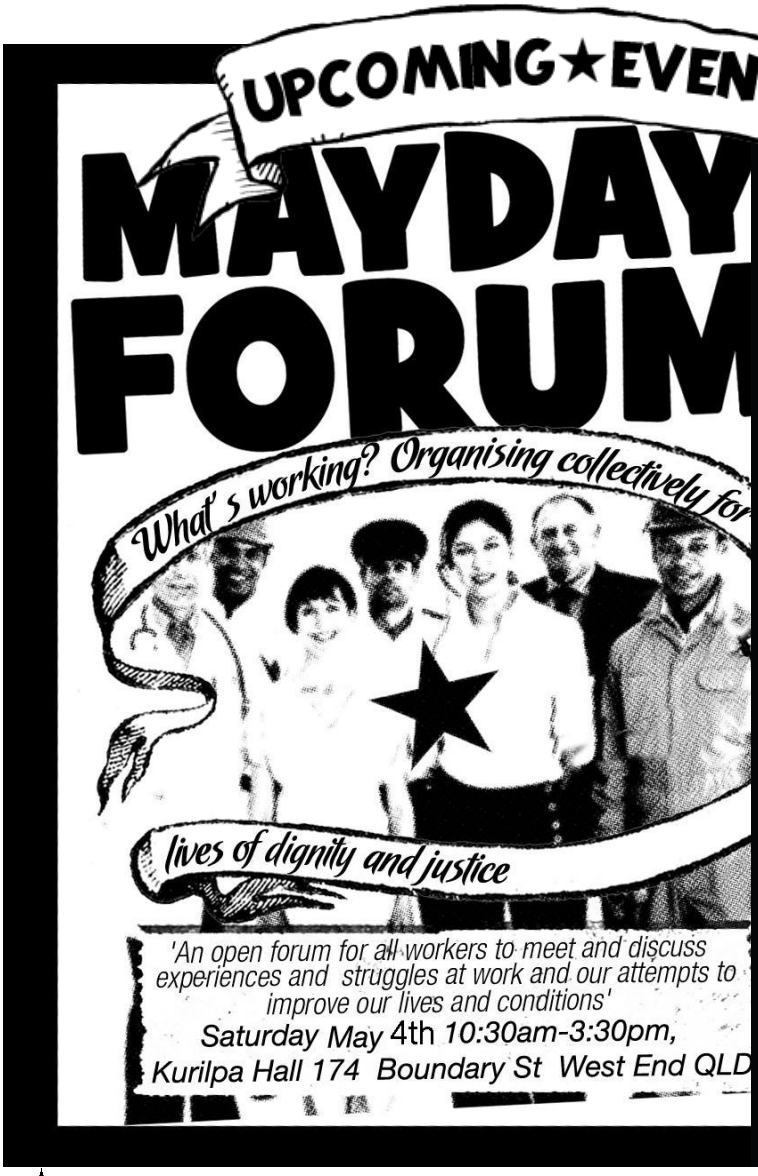
No, the mistake in this strategy is the belief that society is based on rational arguments in the first place. **Our society is not a debating chamber, but a power struggle between different groups and classes with competing and opposing interests**. We are *not* all in this together. The bosses interests as a *class* (the never ending pursuit to squeeze out more profit) are not the same as ours. The all devouring planetary work-machine that is the market society, with its constraints demanding subservience to profit and hierarchy, is intent on locking us all down.

The government are making these cuts because they suit the rich, the wealthy and the powerful – that small section of society that control the means of production, distribution, exchange and communication. They can get away with it not because they are right, but because they hold power. They won't be swayed by argument, because from such a position of strength all arguments can be safely ignored. If necessary they can enforce their decisions using the media, intimidation, police and courts. The ruling class has its own global and local networks of solidarity and uses its own direct methods to secure its interests and maintain its privileges – so why shouldn't we?

The legacy of rights and social gains which we enjoy today weren't granted as gifts from above— they were won and forced upon the system through popular struggle and have to be maintained through struggle. Everything we've won in the past through grassroots struggle they want to take away. The tenants rights sector, public services, support for LGBT communities, the right to strike, abortion rights, schools (and their ovals!) the health of our communities and environment…If we don't get organised we basically give those in power a blank cheque to do as they wish. Direct action, strikes, occupations, economic blockades: the government attempts to force its decisions upon us, so we must force our collective decisions upon them

Despite the hopeful recent upsurge in industrial action, as workers we're starting from an incredibly low point. We are a 'lost generation'–most people aren't unionised and many consider the union's presence irrelevant. Most of us haven't participated in a strike or experienced any real victory through organised struggle. There's such a history of defeat in Brisbane, and no real avenues for older militants who were involved in successful struggles to pass on their lessons. That doesn't mean that those of us with limited experiences have nothing to offer. We can learn as we go by not letting the behaviour of those who hold power directly over us slide. Picketing landlords who steal our bond; refusing to let bosses divide us into meeting one-on-one.

There are lots of things bubbling under the surface and we need to start finding ways to pass on basic, nuts and bolts organising tactics. See the following pages for upcoming events and some of the things you can choose to get involved with.



★**Anarchist contingent at the mayday march this Sunday. Assemble at 9:45 towards the back of the march (Usually ends up near Wharf street).**

★**6Degrees Presents.. Community forum: coal trains and our health. Kurilpa Scout Hall, Park Rd, Yeronga Wednesday, May 8, 2013 7:00pm –8:30pm**

★**Support the Aboriginal Sovereign Embassy. Open embassy meetings held every Wednesday, 6pm around the sacred fire – Musgrave Park South Brisbane.**

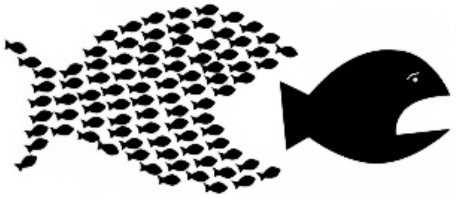
★ **Food not Bombs - Australians continue to throw out three million tones of food every year – the equivalent of 145 kilograms for each and every one of us. *Food not bombs aims to intercept this cycle of waste.* We currently have a party with free food out the front of Small Park ('People's Park') on Boundary Street West End, opposite the Lizard statue every Friday night. Serving around 6:30pm till 9pm. Cooking starts at around 4 at the Waiters Union Kitchen at 69 Thomas Street West End**

★ **Who are we?** BSN meet fortnightly! To get involved, to jump on our mailing list or for more info email bsn@riseup.net // 07 4422 0238 // **HTTP://WWW.SOLNET.CO.NR**

All of us at some point in time have suffered from unjust treatment from employers, landlords, or other institutions which hold unaccountable power over our lives. We believe that by working together people can protect themselves from exploitation, improve their situation and being to build the foundations for a better world. Part of this means avoiding channels which diffuse our energies into unaccountable bureaucracies which can demobilise movements from above and encourage a culture of dependence and hierarchy. This is what direct action is about – doing things ourselves and building popular people power. This can mean coming together against abusive behaviour from a boss or landlord, but it's also about empowering all those involved, spreading our collective power, creating a strong culture of communality, solidarity and mutual-aid. We see this process as one that moves towards gaining more control in the work/housing process itself - a step towards total self-management - transforming and democratising society down to its very roots. When disputes arise - whether it's a dodgy landlord who has stolen bond, or a boss withholding wages - we come together to make a set of demands that would resolve the problem, present these demands, and, if this fails to resolve the offense; to organise a direct-action campaign to win a resolution

BRISBANE SOLIDARITY NETWORK

Casting aside illusions: Preparing for struggle



Despite not having access to the full Final Report of the Queensland Commission of Audit and thus not know the details of the full 155 suggestions it makes we can be fairly confident that a continuing and intensifying project of jobs losses, privatisations and reductions of funding will be unleashed on the public service and community sector. At its core these efforts are about pushing the costs of social reproduction onto the shoulders of workers, intensify the work of those in the public and community sector, to make the state more attractive for investment, facilitating the development of pro-business infrastructure and increase the profit making opportunities for capital. When (and not *if*) the Coalition wins the Federal election in September we can be sure that such efforts will be carried out on a Federal level too. Previously radicals would make a politically argument about why it is a mistake to place any faith in the ALP – such arguments are now moot, as whatever faith one may have in the ALP they seem destined for electoral annihilation. This annihilation will probably by itself produce nothing but bad faith and recrimination, and will seem to many people as a moment of sadness and despair. Ideologically the probable large size of the vote for the Coalition will be trumpeted as a sign of popular support for the onslaught to come.

What then should be done? How can we organise resistance against these efforts? It seems sensible that even though we don't know the timetable of these attacks that it is necessary to prepare beforehand. Such an approach must be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances and events.

To begin with what is the reason to resist the government's attacks? Firstly to defend the conditions of the class as they actually are. But intertwined in this our eyes must be set on the 'communist horizon'. It is through struggle that we hope to increasing proletarian autonomy and combativity. It is through struggle that people experience and construct new levels of solidarity and confidence, form new organisations and bonds, and open up the possibilities they can see for society and life.

The starting point needs to be that the society that we live in is a *capitalist society*. This means that the prime motivation for how society functions is the *accumulation of value*. These processes of accumulation means that society is profoundly dived by class – mainly between those who own capital, and those who don't and are thus generally dependent on selling their ability to work for a wage. The relationship between them is antagonistic – ***but*** on a day-to-day basis this antagonism is hidden and the ideas of class are not ones people commonly use to understand the world they live in. Some of the implications of this are

1. These attacks can't be explained by reference simply to the idea of the LNP. Rather the LNP government is attempting, in its own ideological way, to address larger barriers and limitations for capital.

2. Resistance to these attacks shouldn't aim to solve capital's limitations and barriers nor suggest a 'Plan B' for capital, but rather intensify the contradictions by asserting our own demands and requirements *despite* capital's inability to fit them within its frame work of value, profit and accumulation. *We don't want to solve capitalisms problems – but rather intensify them.*
3. Despite the low level of active politicisation we shouldn't never underestimate the hidden current of dissatisfaction that exists in capitalist society. Rather we should aim to help give into these dissatisfactions and tensions collective expression and form. These everyday desires and resistances are the basic substance of communist possibilities, not leftist ideology.
4. But we shouldn't underestimate the weight of capitalist social relations – this is after all where people live. Struggle has to start where people are at – but this itself in complex, contradictory and uneven
5. The method of struggling and organising needs to be consistent with the broad goals of increasing proletarian autonomy: they should aim to foster self-activity, autonomy, and deeper levels of understanding amongst the class. We should aim to build 'a new political stage' for the people exterior to the state and social democratic organisations (Badiou 2002,p.97).

From this foundation where do we move to? It seems smart to attempt to pre-empt the government's moves and prepare before the cuts happen. One of the lessons of 2012 is that the class is not organised or subjectively strong enough to fight against the cuts on a whole. Rather it perhaps makes more senses to pick a certain site and prepare there – *being ready if needed to shift our focus as events unfold.*

Since public transport is both a) one of the major assets the government plans to privatise; b) the workplace of one of our comrades it make sense to at least consider it as a place to prepare to fight in.

Tasks should we carry out:

1. Mapping and investigation

    a. A comprehensive overview of the size, structure, organisation and financials of both Queensland Rail and Brisbane City Rail
    b. A comprehensive inventory of the workforce and its locations. Develop an understanding of how workers are already organised – not just unions, but social clubs, friendship networks, popular after hours hang-outs, cafes and pubs.
    c. Investigation and inquiry into the already existing antagonisms inside the workplaces, workers already existing modes of struggle and the language that is used to express these.
    d. Investigation and inquiry into the strategies and tactics of management – and a comprehensive inventory of these
    e. A list and appraisal of contacts that we know inside the workplaces
    f. A list of and appraisal those outside the workforce who could be potential allies

2. Research
    a. Carry out comprehensive research of
        i. The impacts of public transport privatisation elsewhere
        ii. Campaigns and their failures and successes elsewhere and in the past

3. Strategy and Tactics
    a. Based on the above carry out a thorough going discussion on the possibilities of what a small group largely exterior to the workplace can do. *Be mindful of not falling into either apolitical defences of public services or highly ideological ultraleftism*
        i. What can be done in the lead up to the attacks?
        ii. What can we argue for, and where can we make these arguments, when the attacks happen?
    b. Select a series of strategies we might find effective and prepare for them (materials, websites, social media)
    c. Disseminated these ideas in a popular form to a wider range of comrades and contacts.
    d. Develop a collective name for our efforts that can express wider popular desires in a cultural relevant and appealing way – avoid boring or insane names. I would suggest names such as 'We are the city' – linking the struggle against private transport with bigger ideas of a decent life in a way that stresses our collectivity and our power. Emphasise our struggle with words like 'dignity', 'equality' and 'justice'.
    e. We need to have an experimental attitude with expressing the theory behind our position that doesn't fall into mush or dogma.
    f. *Put these into practice*
        i. Carry out the activities than can happen before the government moves.
        ii. Cohere a larger organisation group.
    g. Be prepared to revise, change or throw away our approaches as conditions change.

This list in itself as partial and limited and has been written mainly to continue to develop lines of discussion and conversation so we can formulate an approach.

withsobersenses.wordpress.com